

Creating Communities

Cooking,
crafting &
gardening from
across the world
at home



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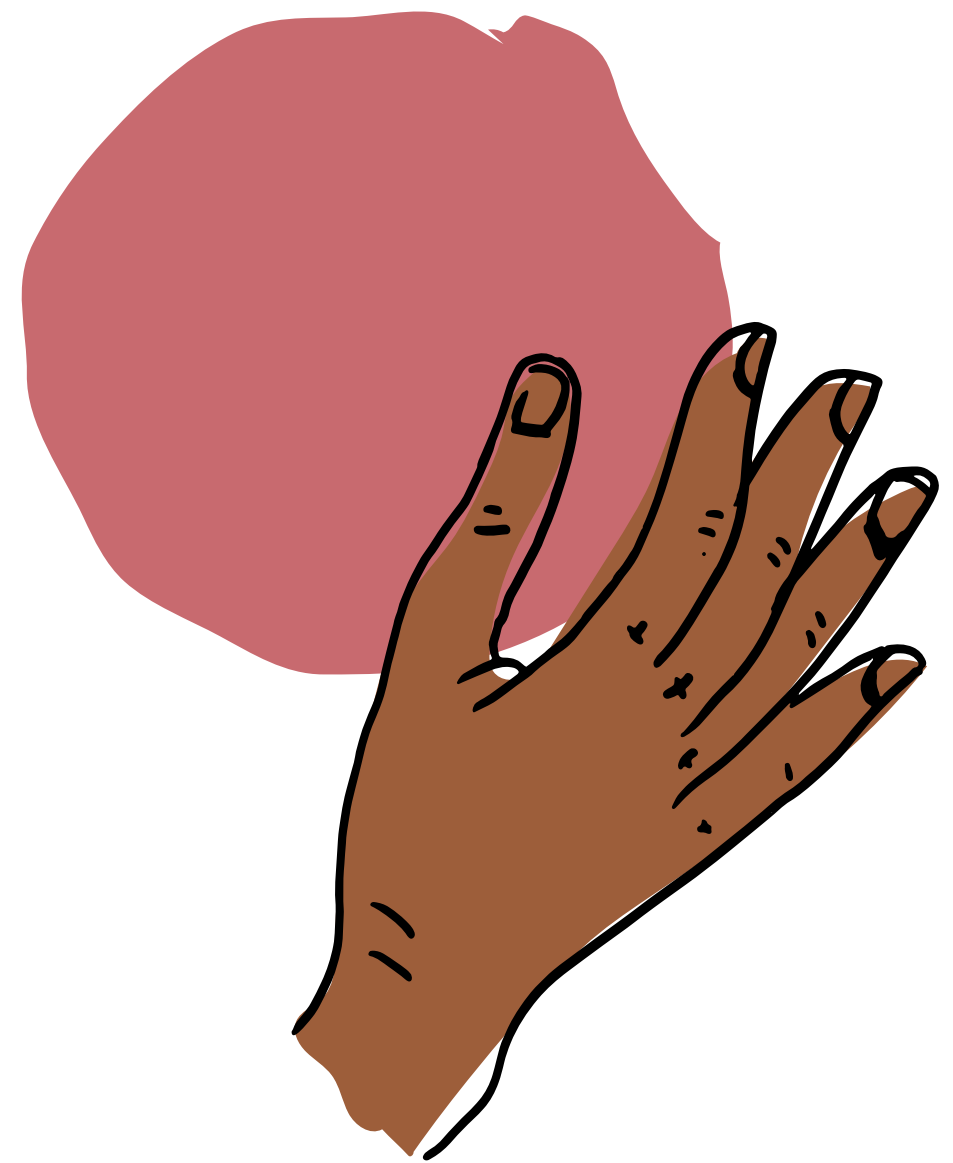
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With special thanks to Sozen for her poetry, and to all our other generous contributors.



Introduction: journeying through a small world of many different cultures

This book has been created and curated by individuals living in London from all over the world. We were brought together by a project called Full Circle, where refugees, migrants and people born in the UK came together to share creative and cultural experiences.

In these pages you will find a collection of recipes, stories and ideas from our different backgrounds to show you some traditional and not-so-traditional ways of cooking, crafting and gardening at home and in your community. For those who are new to the UK, we hope this book can help you learn about the many different people who live here. And for those who have lived in the UK for a long time, we hope to show you that there is a small world of many different cultures here for you to explore.

"In the small world of London we meet people from lots of different cultures" – Aamira

While journeying together, we have found that every culture has its own traditions of crafting and creating. Of making something new out of something old instead of waste. And of course, of making delicious food to share with friends and family.

"In some countries it is forbidden to eat on your own and not share it. Food is life." – Nora

In this book we share our ideas about being outside, gardening and growing, here and in the other countries some of us have come from. We have met in London, where homes are often very small and it is important to find a special green place outside. But you will also know what it means to escape into nature. You have also experienced 'lockdown' in 2020 when this was written. Maybe on your local walks you have looked at the trees differently or taken more notice of the flowers.



Some of us are refugees, which means we were forced to leave our homes and make long journeys that were stressful and traumatic. And life in the UK can be difficult for many reasons for different kinds of people. For all of us, these hobbies are something we turn to when we want to express ourselves, connect with others, or when we need to do something reflective and feel motivated. A journey we take to build something new.

"We believe that anything that brings people together is a positive thing. It's not about one type of people or one type of ideas. We want to show that, no matter what age you are, you can still get up and do something positive." – Desmond

There is a joy you can get from trying something new and building your confidence by learning it on your own or alongside other people.

We hope the activities here will also inspire you to connect with your inner creativity and maybe even build connections with others.

"If someone doesn't have any dreams, give them ideas. When you ask someone what they like, sometimes they say they don't like anything. But these shared experiences from many countries with traditional practices show you can work on things and learn and improve." – Houdah

Exploring these activities together has shown us how we can create communities by celebrating the many ways people have of doing the same thing, whilst acknowledging and appreciating the different routes we have taken before arriving here.



"It's bringing communities together from all walks of life, all age groups. There's no barrier. We all try. It doesn't matter where you're from or what you've done, what disability you've got or what problems you've got, everybody gets together and joins in." – Sue

Thank you for journeying with us,

The Full Circle curators.

Algerian cooking

Nora's kesra bread

Kesra is a flatbread made from semolina and is a staple in Algeria. Kesra is traditionally cooked on a flat, round clay griddle, known as a tagine.

Serves 4

500g fine semolina (or 300g semolina and 200g flour)

1 tablespoon dried yeast

1 tablespoon sugar

4 tablespoons milk powder

1 teaspoon salt

About 350ml warm water

Bread seeds of your choice (optional)

A few dabs of butter

Oil to grease the baking sheets

In a large bowl, mix together the semolina (or a mixture of semolina and flour) with the sugar, yeast, salt, milk powder and bread seeds of your choice (if using). Mix well and slowly add about 300ml of warm water. Cover and set aside to allow the dough to absorb the water.

Knead vigorously by gradually adding the rest of water (about 50ml). This step helps to release the gluten that will give you a

spongy and light bread. Cover and let the dough rise for 1 hour, or more depending on the season.

Punch down the dough. Divide into 2 or 3 portions and incorporate a knob of softened butter into each ball.

Place the balls of dough on a pre-oiled sheet of greaseproof paper and leave to stand for a while.

Flatten each ball into a large disc. Cover and leave in a warm place until the dough has doubled in size. This might take half an hour to an hour.

Preheat the clay tagine, or an iron skillet/pan of your choice. Lower the heat prior to cooking. Using the greeseproof paper side to protect your hand, gently place the kesra dough directly on to the tagine/pan. Then, carefully peel off the greaseproof paper.

Poke the dough with a toothpick or a knife and rotate now and then

to avoid burning the bread. Using a large spatula, flip it to the other side and let it cook until golden brown.

Once the kesra is cooked, brown the edges by exposing it directly to the flame on the hob if possible. Enjoy with any gravy-like dish, dips or just on its own.

Nora's shakshouka

Shakshouka (or chakchouka) is popular throughout North Africa and the Middle East. It's known as jaz-maz in Syria, makhlama in Iraq, and some people would simply call it eggs and tomatoes. It is usually eaten for breakfast or lunch, but it's tasty any time of day!



Nora's shakshouka continued

Serves about 6

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 kg mix of coloured Cubanelle peppers, sliced
2-3 chilli peppers, deseeded and slices (optional)
4 large ripe tomatoes, cut into large pieces
3-4 garlic cloves, minced
2 large onions, sliced
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 teaspoon sweet paprika
Generous pinch of ground cumin
Harissa paste to taste
1 egg per person
Small bunch of coriander, chopped
Small bunch of parsley, chopped

Heat the oil in a large pot (you will need one with a lid). Add the onion and sauté for a few minutes until softened. Then, add in the peppers,

tomatoes and garlic and sauté for an additional 3-4 minutes.

Add the tomato paste, harissa and spices and bring to a simmer. Simmer on a low heat for about 10-15 minutes.

As soon as the vegetables are cooked and the sauce's consistency has thickened a little, make a well in the stew for each of your eggs and add these in.

The eggs will be poached by the stew. Space the eggs to give them room and put the lid on the pot.

Wait for the white to set – as long as 10 minutes, depending on the size of the eggs. The yolk should be runny. Sprinkle with chopped coriander and parsley before serving.

Variation:

Try adding merguez sausage or extra vegetables such as aubergine, courgette, fried potatoes, or steamed fava beans. Houdah makes her own version of this dish every day for breakfast in her family, using a special seven spice blend from Syria.



Bangladeshi cooking



"I learnt how to cook these dishes from watching my dad. Lentil dhal is very simple and is not spicy, so it can be very comforting for everyone."

The bhaji is a great vegetarian dish and can be used to fill the samosas.

Pakora is a favourite in our house, and is a great way to use up potatoes before they go bad."
– Mina

Mina's tarka dhal

Serves about 6

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
3 cups lentils
1 white onion, thinly sliced
1 cup of chopped coriander
1 tablespoon salt
1 tablespoon turmeric powder
1 tablespoon garam masala
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 tomatoes, chopped

Wash the lentils several times and leave to soak in water for 5-10 minutes. Place the lentils in a deep pot over a medium heat and completely cover with cold water.

Add the sliced onions to the pot

with turmeric and salt. Bring to a boil, skimming off any residue that forms on the surface.

Simmer, covered, for 30 minutes, giving the pot an occasional stir.

In a separate pan, fry the garlic in vegetable oil until golden and crispy – this is your tarka. Add the tomatoes and garam masala and cook slightly.

While hot, pour the tarka into the lentil pot (it should sizzle!).

Stir the dhal, top with fresh coriander and serve.

Mina's pakoras

Serves 6-10

Vegetable oil as required to shallow fry

- 2 potatoes, cut into small slices
- 1 white onion, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon turmeric powder
- 1 egg
- 1 cup besan (gram) flour
- 1 cup chopped coriander
- 1 chilli (optional)

Wash the potato slices to get rid of excess starch.

In a large bowl mix together the potatoes and chopped onion. Add the egg, salt, turmeric powder, curry powder, besan flour, coriander and chilli. Mix thoroughly for 1–2 minutes. If it is too wet add more flour, and if it is too dry add some water.

Next, heat the vegetable oil in a deep pan.

Mina's top tip: garnish your food with fresh coriander to make it special. Take your time to cook. After it is cooked leave it on low heat for a few minutes to enhance the flavour.

Check if it is hot enough by placing a slice of potato in the oil – if it sizzles, it is ready.

Using a tablespoon, scoop out the mixture and drop into the oil. Do not touch the scoop once it is in the oil. Flip after 1 minute when you can see it getting golden.

Cook for another minute, then remove and place on kitchen towel to drain off excess oil. Leave to cool for a moment and enjoy!

Mina's vegetable bhajis

This dish can also be used as a filling for samosas, a popular snack in South Asian countries made by deep-frying triangular filo pastry parcels.

Serves about 6

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon ginger, minced
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon turmeric powder
- 2 tablespoons curry powder
- 2 chopped potatoes, partially cooked
- About 2 cups of vegetables, partially cooked and cut into chunks (such as broccoli, cauliflower, carrots)
- 1 cup cabbage, shredded
- 1 cup frozen/tinned peas
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup coriander, chopped
- Green chilli (optional)

In a large pan over a medium heat, add 3 tablespoons of oil with the ginger and garlic and cook for 30 seconds.

Add onions, curry powder, turmeric and salt and fry until the onions are cooked.

Add the chopped potatoes and cook for another 3 minutes, until potatoes have slightly softened.

Add the rest of the vegetables and cook for 3 minutes, until all softened. Set aside and allow to cool. Add chopped coriander and chilli to garnish.



Chinese cooking

Chow mein

Serves 4

1 packet egg noodles
1 tablespoon sesame oil
3 tablespoons groundnut oil
2 slices root ginger, shredded
1 garlic clove, crushed
4 teaspoons soy sauce
2 teaspoons dry sherry (optional)
Pinch of sugar
Mix of vegetables for stir-frying

Cook the noodles as per the instructions on the pack and drain. Rinse in cold water, drain again

thoroughly and toss in sesame oil to prevent noodles sticking.

Heat groundnut oil in a hot wok. Add the ginger and garlic and stir-fry briefly.

Add the vegetables and stir-fry for 2-3 minutes over a high heat.

Add the noodles, soy sauce, sugar and sherry.

Drizzle with sesame oil just before serving.

Broccoli and runner beans

Serves 4

1 head of broccoli, cut into chunks
Handful of runner beans, trimmed
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon cornflour
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon rice vinegar
1 tablespoon sesame oil
3 tablespoons hoisin sauce
1 teaspoon fresh root ginger, minced
2 cloves garlic, minced

Bring lightly salted water to boil, add the broccoli and runner beans and cook until just tender (about 4 minutes). Drain and set aside.

Whisk the sugar, cornflour, soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, hoisin sauce, ginger and garlic together in a saucepan over a medium heat until thickened and no longer cloudy. This will take 5-7 mins.

Toss the broccoli and runner beans in the sauce and serve.

Dumpling dipping sauce

Serves 4

1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon hot water
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon rice vinegar
1 teaspoon chilli oil
1 teaspoon garlic, minced
1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds
½ teaspoon sesame oil

Dissolve the sugar in the hot water, then add the soy sauce, rice vinegar, chilli oil, the ginger, season seeds and sesame oil. Stir to combine.



Vegetable dumplings

Serves 4

1 packet dumpling wrappers
5 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 tablespoon ginger, minced
1 large onion, chopped
2 cups shiitake mushrooms, chopped
1½ cups cabbage, shredded
1½ cups carrots, shredded
1 cup garlic chives (Chinese chives), finely chopped
½ teaspoon ground pepper
2 teaspoons sesame oil
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon sugar
Salt (to taste)

In a wok over medium heat, cook the ginger in about 3 tablespoons of oil for 30 seconds.

Add onion and stir-fry until translucent. Add chopped mushrooms and stir-fry for another 3-5 minutes, until liquid

from the mushrooms has cooked off, then add the cabbage and carrots and stir-fry for 2 minutes, until all liquid has cooked off.

Set aside and allow to cool, then add chopped chives, ground pepper, sesame oil, soy sauce and sugar. Season with salt to taste.

Assemble the dumplings by placing a small amount of the vegetable mixture in each dumpling wrapper, then lightly brush the edges of the wrapper with water to help it stick together.

Fold the wrapper in half over the filling and, using your fingers, pleat the edges to seal.

To steam-fry, heat 2 tablespoons oil in a non-stick pan over medium heat. Place the dumplings in the pan and allow to fry for 2 minutes.

Pour a thin layer of water into the pan, cover and reduce heat to medium-low. Steam until the water has evaporated.

Remove the cover, increase heat to medium-high and allow to fry for a few more minutes until they are golden brown and crispy on the bottom.



Iranian cooking

Kashke bademjan

A Persian dip made with aubergines (bademjan is aubergine in Farsi) and kashk, a delicacy made from drained yoghurt or sour milk.

Serves 6 as a side dish

6 medium aubergines
1 large onion
1 tablespoon chopped mint, fresh or dried
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon salt
5 cloves garlic
½ cup walnuts, plus extra for garnish
1 cup kashk to taste, or yoghurt
Vegetable oil

Cut the tops off the aubergines, peel them and slice them in half lengthwise. Heat vegetable oil in a frying pan and fry the aubergines until soft and golden. Set aside.

Slice the onions and place them in a frying pan with heated oil. Chop the

garlic and add to the pan. Fry until golden.

Add salt, mint and turmeric to the onions and stir. Reserve some of this mixture to use as a garnish and set aside. Add the fried aubergines to the rest of the mixture in the pan and add ½ cup water. Leave to cook for 10-15 minutes on a medium heat.

Crush the walnuts and add these to the pan. Mash the mixture until smooth. Transfer to a bowl and top with kashk (or yoghurt), then sprinkle with the remaining fried onion mixture and some chopped walnuts.

watermelon and feta salad

Serves 6 as a side dish

1 watermelon, rind removed and cut into chunks
Large handful of pine nuts, toasted
A few handfuls of mint, roughly chopped
1 cup feta cheese, crumbled

In a large bowl, mix together the watermelon, mint and pine nuts.

Sprinkle with crumbled feta and serve.

kuku

A traditional Iranian egg dish made with more greens than a frittata.

Serves 6

6 eggs
1 cup fresh parsley, roughly chopped
1 cup fresh coriander, roughly chopped
1 cup dill, roughly chopped
1 cup garlic chives or spring onions, chopped
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
½ teaspoon each of turmeric, cumin, cinnamon and ground cardamom
⅓ cup of walnuts, toasted and chopped (optional)
1-2 tablespoons zereshk (barberries) (optional)
3 tablespoons olive oil

Place the eggs in a bowl and whisk with baking powder, salt and pepper. Add herbs, chives/spring onions, walnuts and zereshk to the eggs. Mix well.

Heat the oil in a large non-stick skillet. Pour in the egg and herbs mixture and press down gently with a spatula. Cover and cook for about 20 minutes on a low heat.

Using a plate, flip the kuku, cover and cook the other side for another 20 minutes. Remove from the heat and cool for 10 minutes. Invert the kuku onto a serving platter and cut into 6 wedges.



Photo:
Freepik

Lebanese cooking

Moudardara

Moudardara in Arabic means “scattered” or “dispersed”, which describes the texture of this dish. Perfect accompanied by a salad, yoghurt and pickles.

Serves 4

Extra-virgin olive oil
400g/2 cups dried brown lentils
100g/½ cup rice
2 onions, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon cumin
Juice from 1 lemon
Sea salt

Rinse the lentils well with water and drain.

Also rinse the rice.

Add the lentils to a pot with enough water to cover them, and a pinch of salt.

Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for about 15 minutes.

While the lentils are cooking, heat a little olive oil in a frying pan over a medium heat and add the sliced onions with a pinch of salt. Stir well to coat the onions and sauté for about 5 minutes, until they are tender and golden.

Keep some of the onions for decoration at the end. Add the rest to the lentils with the cumin.

Once the lentils have cooked, add the rinsed rice and a teaspoon of salt. Make sure there is enough cooking water from the lentils to cook the rice – if not add more.

Cook on a low heat until the rice is ready and the cooking water has evaporated, approximately 10 minutes.

Remove from the heat. Add the lemon juice, drizzle with olive oil and serve with the remaining sautéed onions on top.

Fattoush salad

Making fattoush is an excellent way of using up stale leftover bread.

Serves 4

Leftover pitta or flatbread
1 large onion, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon sumac
1 teaspoon pomegranate molasses
Salt and pepper to taste
1 small head romaine lettuce, chopped
3 medium tomatoes, chopped
4 small cucumbers, thinly sliced
Handful of radishes, thinly sliced
1 small bunch parsley, finely chopped
Handful of mint leaves, finely chopped
The juice of a lemon, freshly squeezed
Extra-virgin olive oil

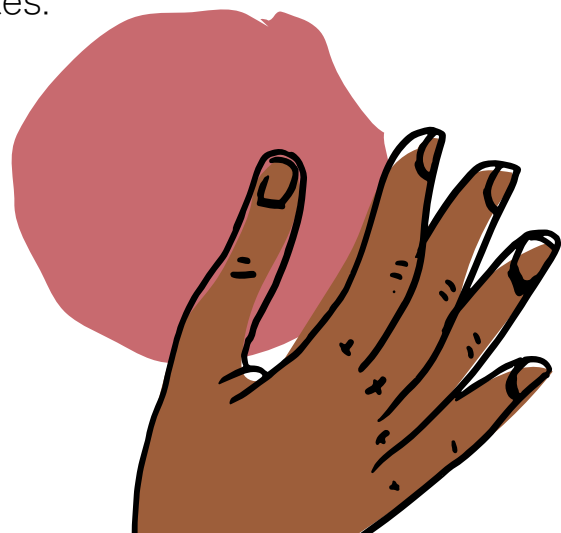
Toss the bread with a little oil and toast in the oven until browned. Allow to cool slightly, then break into shards.

In a large bowl, mix together the onion with the sumac, a pinch of salt and pepper and a teaspoon of pomegranate molasses.

Mix in the lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, radishes, parsley and mint.

Add the lemon juice and a little olive oil, mix well and season to taste.

When ready to serve, add the toasted bread pieces.



Nigerian cooking

Jessica's plantain & chickpea curry

Serves 4

1 ripe plantain, diced
2 tablespoons coconut flour
(or cornflour)
1-2 tablespoons sunflower oil
½ red onion, chopped
1 yellow bell pepper, chopped
3 tablespoons spice paste (equal
parts onion powder, dried coriander,
ground ginger, turmeric, cumin,
fenugreek, cinnamon, nutmeg and
dried garlic)
1 tin coconut milk
1-2 Scotch bonnet peppers, halved
1 cup cooked chickpeas or beans
Salt to taste
Spring onions, chopped, to garnish

Start by coating the diced plantain
in coconut flour or corn flour.
Heat the sunflower oil in a large
pan and add the chopped red
onion, yellow bell pepper and
coated plantain, along with the
spice paste. Stir continuously for
a minute or so to cook off the
spices and brown the plantain a
little.

Add the tin of coconut milk and
when it comes to a boil, add
the scotch bonnet pepper and
chickpeas/beans. Season with salt.
Allow to simmer for 8-10 minutes.
The flour should help thicken the
curry slightly.

Finish with a
generous handful
of chopped
spring onions.
For some extra
crunch, you
can also add
a handful of
coconut chips.



"I learnt to cook from my
family, my mother taught me
how to. Whenever I'm cooking I
remember back home in Nigeria
with my siblings and my
mother, she would be cooking
it and we'd be chatting whilst
she'd be telling us what to do,
what to put in and what not
to. Especially don't put in too
much salt! I still remember
even though I'm not there
and I'm trying to teach my
daughter that as well."
-Jessica



Jessica's jollof rice

Serves about 6

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
500g long grain rice
2 tins of tomatoes
1 onion, finely chopped
1 chilli, finely chopped
2 stock cubes
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 tablespoon curry powder

Wash the rice repeatedly to
remove excess starch.

In a pot, heat up the vegetable
oil and add the onion and chilli.
Cook until softened, then add the
tinned tomatoes, followed by the
rice.

Add enough water to just cover
the rice and stir in the stock
cubes and spices. Cook on a
medium heat with the lid on.

Stir occasionally to make sure rice
is not being burnt. Once the rice
is soft it's ready to serve.



Jessica's plantain chips

Make as many as required

Plantain (not over- or under- ripe)
Salt to taste
Vegetable oil as required to shallow fry

Peel and wash the plantain and then slice and place in a bowl.

Add salt to taste and toss in the bowl to make sure it is coated evenly.

In a pan, heat up the vegetable oil for shallow frying. Fry the plantain on each side and turn when golden.

"I don't really get it exactly how she did it. When mothers cook their food tastes better than what we cook" - Jessica

Drain the plantain on some kitchen roll. Serve with a salad, or as a dessert with custard.



Jessica's yam porridge

Serves 4

1 yam (Puna or Brazilian)
1 tin chopped tomatoes
1 onion
½ red onion
Mixed bell peppers
Salt to taste
1 vegetable stock cube
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 chilli (optional)
About 500ml water

Peel and cut the yam into small chunks, wash and place in a pot.

Pour in water to cover the yam and cook on a medium to high heat.

Chop the onion and chilli and add to the pot once water is boiled.



Add the stock cube to the pot and salt to taste. Cover the pot and cook until the yam and onions are tender.

Finally, add the mixed peppers and tinned chopped tomatoes to add some colour!



Sri Lankan cooking

Kiribath (milk rice)

Kiribath in Sinhala means milk rice. This is a traditional dish in Sri Lanka that is often served for breakfast on the first day of each month.

Serves 4

2½ cups white short-grain rice
(ideally Sri Lankan rice called kekulu)
3 cups thick coconut milk
5 cups water
Salt to taste

Wash the rice and place it in a saucepan with the water and salt.

Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer until the water is absorbed and the rice is tender.

Add the coconut milk and mix well. Cover the pan and continue to simmer gently until the liquid is absorbed and the rice is very soft and creamy.

Allow to cool a little, then transfer to a wide shallow serving dish and flatten down with the back of a spoon or spatula.

Cut into diamond or square shapes and serve.



Susima's seeni murukku (sugar-coated dough diamonds)

"Kids like it so much!" – Susima

Makes about 100g

For the dough:

1 cup flour
Pinch of salt
1 tablespoon butter
Water as needed

For the syrup:

½ cup sugar
¼ cup water
Vegetable oil for deep-frying

Put the flour, salt and butter in a bowl and rub together with your fingers until it resembles breadcrumbs. Add water slowly and knead to a dough. Let it rest for 30 minutes or so.

Roll out the dough thinly using a rolling pin and cut it into small diamond shapes.

Heat oil for deep-frying, drop the diamonds into the oil and fry until golden.

Heat the sugar and water in a pan and mix well until the sugar is dissolved. Boil and cook until it thickens.

Now add the fried diamond cuts to the syrup and coat well. As it cools the sugar will harden.



Syrian cooking

Fatima's dates ma'amoul

Traditionally, special wooden ma'amoul moulds are used to give artistic shapes to these cookies, which are often made for special occasions and celebrations such as Eid. The recipe uses an aromatic spice called mahleb (or mahab), which is made from the cracked pits of the St Lucie wild cherry.

Makes about 36

Dough ingredients:

3 cups all-purpose flour
½ cup fine semolina
¼ cup toasted sesame seeds
2 sticks unsalted butter, softened
3 tablespoons powdered milk
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon instant yeast
¾ cup of warm water
1 teaspoon ground mahleb
1 tablespoon ground mixture of anise seeds and fennel seeds
½ teaspoon ground mastic
Pinch of salt

Filling:

600g dates

Variation:

You can experiment with shapes and moulds, forming the ma'amoul into squares, rings or any other shape you like.

For the dough:

Dissolve sugar and yeast in the warm water, set aside for 5 minutes.

Combine the flour, semolina, sesame seeds, powdered milk, salt and ground spices.

Add the butter and rub between your palms until the flour mixture absorbs all the butter.

Add water gradually until a soft dough is formed – don't overknead the dough!

Cover and let rest for 30 minutes.

For the filling:

Roughly chop the pitted dates. Place in a small saucepan with a tablespoon of water.

Cook down and mash with a fork into a thick paste (or puree in a food processor).

Let cool and shape into little balls of about one teaspoon each.

Take 2 tablespoons of semolina dough and shape it into a ball using the palms of your hands.

Make a hole in the centre so the dough now looks like a bowl and place one ball of date filling in the hole. Seal the hole by wrapping the dough completely around the filling.

Flatten the ball slightly and press it firmly into a mould (or push it into a greased mini muffin pan or mini tart case).

Tap the mould lightly to catch the ma'amoul as they fall out of the mould. Set to one side and repeat. Bake for 10-15 minutes, until lightly brown.

When the cookies come out of the oven, sprinkle them with icing sugar. Serve warm or cool.

Variation:

Nabila from Algeria makes a similar sweet treat called makrout. A homemade date paste is enclosed within a semolina dough, then after baking the cookies are dipped in honey flavoured with orange flower water. Nabila serves makrout as a treat for Eid.



Stuffed grape leaves

Serves 4-6

1 kg grape leaves
3 cups rice
750g-1 kg ground beef
½ cup olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 tablespoon salt
1 tablespoon ground pepper
1 cup crushed tomatoes
2 sliced tomatoes
1 bulb of garlic
Juice of 1 lemon

Boil the leaves for 5 mins to get rid of any dirt and to soften.

To make the stuffing, mix together the rice and ground beef with salt, pepper, olive oil, onion and crushed tomatoes. Mix well.

To roll the leaves, make sure the shiny side of the leaf is facing down.

Cut off the thick stem at the bottom (keep the stems for later).

Place about 1-2 teaspoons of stuffing in the centre of each leaf. Bring in the sides of the leaf and roll, pulling at the same time to keep it tight and smooth and tucking in the sides that stick out.

When you have stuffed all the leaves, lay down the reserved stems at the bottom of a deep pot (this helps

to stop the stuffed leaves from sticking to the pot).

Put about 4 tomato slices and 4 cloves of garlic at the bottom of the pot. Then create a tight layer of stuffed leaves, arranged in a circular form. Make sure they are tightly pressed against one another.

Repeat the process, laying down more tomato slices and garlic cloves and then creating a second layer of grape leaves on top. Keep going until you have used all the stuffed leaves.

Softly push down the layers. If you like, you can add meat (with the bones still attached) as a final layer.

Now pour in enough warm water to cover about 1.5cm over the top layer, and the juice of a lemon. Cover with a plate and a bowl of water, or any other heavy object to weigh it down.

Bring to the boil, then cook on a low-medium heat for 2-3 hours.

When ready, gently transfer the stuffed leaves to a shallow serving bowl.

Be careful not to tear the leaves!



UK cooking

Shortbread

So simple but so good, and using just three ingredients. You can adjust the quantities to make more or less, as long as the ratio is always 3:2:1 for flour, butter and sugar.

Makes about 12

180g plain flour
120g butter, slightly softened
60g caster sugar

Preheat the oven to 170C/150C fan/gas mark 3. Grease a baking tray or line with baking paper.

In a large mixing bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until smooth. Stir in the flour until well combined. Bring the dough together with your

hands and roll out to a thickness of 1cm/½ inch.

Cut into circles or finger shapes. Place on the baking tray and chill in the fridge for 20 mins.

Bake for 15-20 mins until golden brown. Be careful not to overbake the biscuits!

Laura's top tip:
Try adding a spoonful of dried lavender to the mix for a delicious floral flavour



Clare's Cornish pasties

Beef skirt is the cut traditionally used for Cornish pasties.

Makes 6 pasties

For shortcrust pastry

500g strong bread flour

(it is important to use a stronger flour than normal to produce a strong, pliable pastry)

120g lard or white shortening

125g butter

1 teaspoon salt

175ml cold water

For the filling

450g good quality beef skirt, cut into cubes

450g firm waxy potatoes, diced

250g swede, diced

200g onion, sliced

Salt and pepper

Beaten egg or milk to glaze

Heat oven to 165°C. In a large bowl, rub the lard/shortening and butter into the flour until it resembles breadcrumbs.

Add the water, bring the mixture together and knead until the pastry becomes elastic. This will give the pastry the strength that is needed to hold the filling and retain a good shape.

Cover and leave to rest for 3 hours in the fridge. This is an important step as it is difficult to roll and shape the pastry when fresh.

Roll out the pastry and cut into circles approximately 20cm in

diameter. A side plate is an ideal size to use as a template.

Layer the vegetables and meat in the centre of each pastry circle, adding plenty of seasoning.

Form each one into a half circle and crimp the edges together. Then, make a hole in the top with a skewer to let the steam out.

Glaze with beaten egg or an egg-and-milk mixture.

Bake at 165°C (fan oven) for about 50–55 minutes until golden.

Clare's top tip:
You can never make enough! Make lots so you can freeze them or give as gifts. And they make a great picnic meal wrapped in tin foil to keep them warm.



Turkish cooking

Turan and his wife changed their diet to help their health and wellbeing. After six months they both felt much better and had lost weight.

Turan's lentil soup

It only takes half an hour to cook this healthy and simple soup.

For one cup of lentils, add 4 cups of boiling water and simmer on a medium heat for 25 minutes.

Thinly slice one carrot, one raw onion and two or three garlic cloves.

Fry lightly in a separate pan to soften until browned, then add to the lentils. Flavour with salt, turmeric, ginger, chilli pepper and black pepper.

Use a hand blender to blend the soup.

Add a generous dash of olive oil, then simmer for 2-3 minutes more.

"All over the world, high cholesterol is a big problem, but when you change your lifestyle, all health problems are improved. Your life and your immune system changes and you will lead a healthy life. But sometimes we have bad habits like eating sugar and smoking, alcohol and eating bread. I am Middle Eastern, different culture, different immune system. We like to cook with olive oil, thyme, salt and sumac."
-Turan

Turan's healthy morning drink

Serves 1

One lemon
A handful of parsley
A cup of water

Mix the ingredients in a blender for one or two minutes, until the liquid is bright green and fresh.

Drink this 15-20 minutes before breakfast in the morning.

"If you do this for 15 days, and take 5 days break, then continue for another 15, you will feel great inside."

Turan's very easy roast chicken

"Maybe you would like to serve this with rice. But in my home, we find the carrots, potatoes and green peppers enough, so we make a side salad, with fresh basil, spring onion and green pepper, cucumber, with one tomato, sliced, and mixed with sumac, thyme, salt, pomegranate juice and olive oil."

Serves 5-6

Make a small cut in each breast of a small free-range chicken.

In a small bowl, mix one dessert-spoon of yoghurt, one teaspoon of hot sauce, then black pepper, chilli pepper, turmeric, ginger, salt and olive oil.

Mix the sauce, then use your hands to cover the whole chicken – inside, outside, all over – until you are sure it is all covered front, back and sides!

Then slice carrots, potatoes and green peppers, cover with olive oil and roast alongside the chicken in the oven at 180°C centigrade.

Cook the chicken slowly for 1 hour to 1 hour 20 minutes.



Turan's very easy salads

"We are very lucky because I come from Turkey and the Turkish people know nearly a hundred different styles of salads."

Very easy side salad

Slice an onion thinly so that you can see through each slice.

Add sliced tomato and cucumber.

Season with sumac and thyme, salt, a dash of vinegar and, lastly, olive oil.

Then mix with your hands.

Side salad for kebab or roast chicken

Thinly slice a red onion and add sumac, thyme, pomegranate juice, vinegar and olive oil.

As a variation, you can try adding fresh mint, spring onion, green pepper, a chilli (up to you), and black pepper.

"Sumac and thyme for some people in Turkey is a very famous and favourite combination of spice. Others prefer just using salt and pomegranate juice and olive oil."

Turan's favourite healthy snack?

Raw hazelnuts and dried apricots (which are very popular in Turkey).



Speaking truth to hummus

Speaking truth to hummus

long face with measles on the tip of sourdough wedges

creamy poppy seeds doing a sleek dance with edges

Explosions of lavish familiarity

many nimble fingers play

a wilful symphony

still clinging onto faraway winds

remnants of breath

belonging to lives lived

and futures yet to un-yield

numerous winks of creativity

challenging the boundaries of resilience

the courage to trade stability

for unbounded utility

transcending scrutiny

into just hilarity

intoxication

of expectations

in the cacophony

of colours

in serenity

glittering yearning

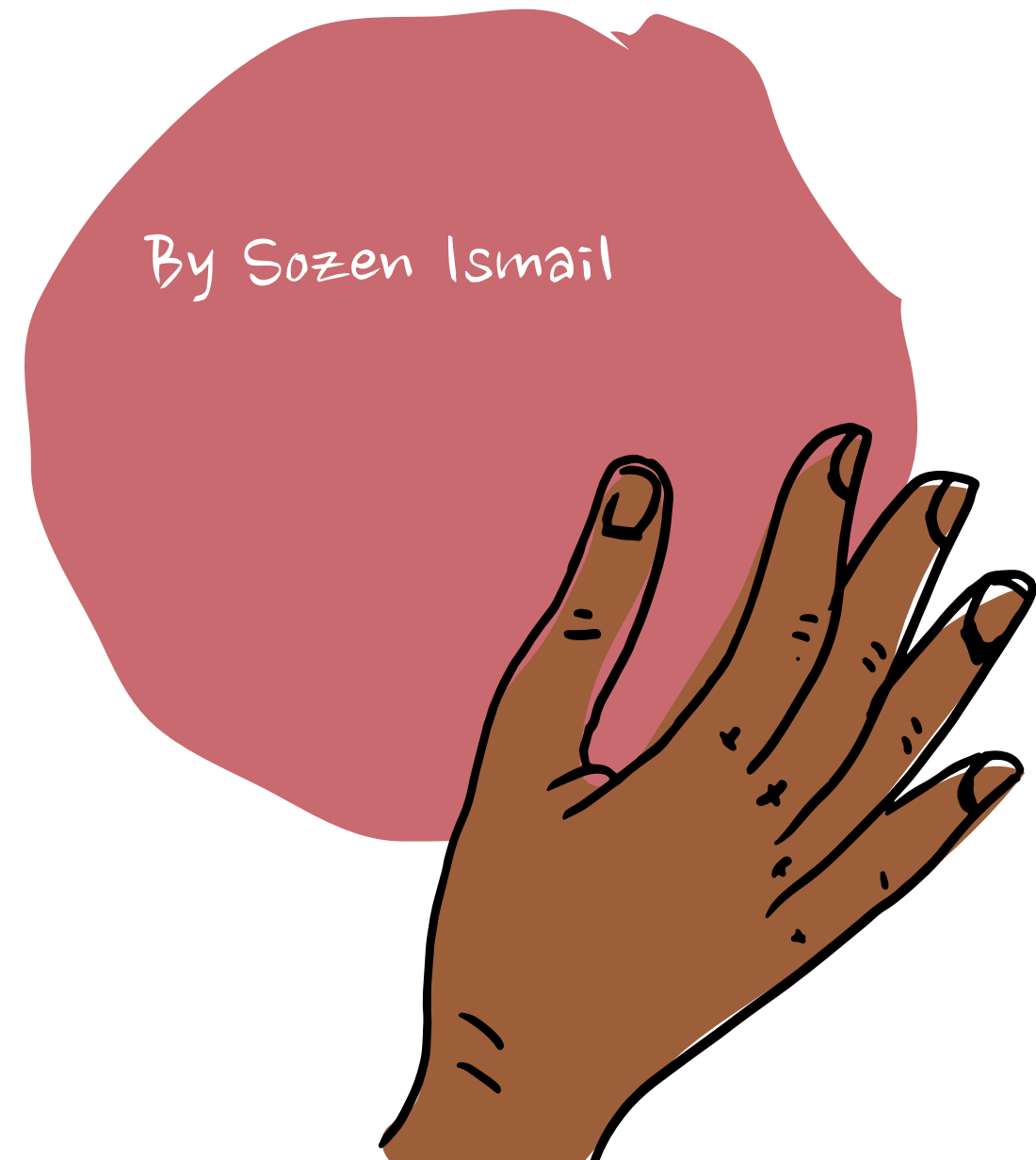
for self-autonomy

that speaks a multitude of tongues

and finally catching the gift of serendipity,

in the lullaby of many a clandestine river buried beneath.

By Sozen Ismail

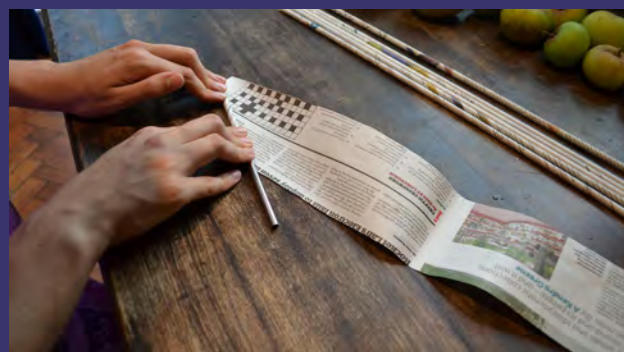


Basket weaving

Basket weaving is an ancient craft practised in many cultures across the world. It is traditionally carried out by weaving natural materials like reeds or willow. Here we show you how you can make baskets and bowls using newspapers and magazines.

You will need:

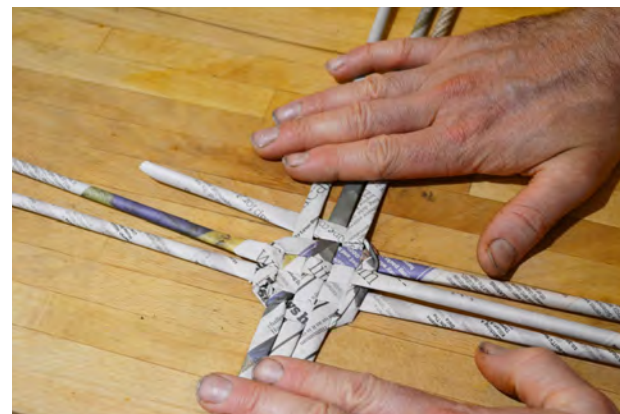
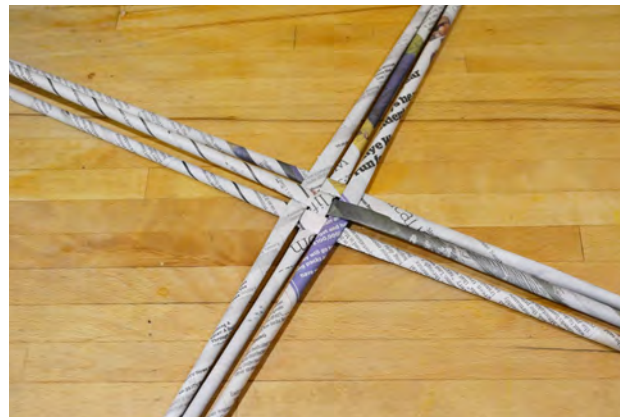
Sheets of newspapers or magazines, with the staples removed
Glue
A skewer or thin knitting needle
Masking tape
Paint (optional)



Making paper tubes

Fold each sheet of newspaper horizontally in half and then half again, and cut into sections to create long strips. Take a strip of paper and place your skewer on a corner at an acute angle – this will give you a longer tube.

Tuck under the corner edge then roll tightly with your fingers to create a long thin tube. Secure the end with a small dab of glue. Repeat.



Weaving method

Start with 12 paper tubes. Join two tubes together by gluing the end of one and slotting it into the other. Repeat to create 6 extended tubes.

Lay these 6 tubes down in a criss-cross pattern – 3 vertically and 3 horizontally.

Take one of the tubes and begin weaving it in a round, under and over the other tubes. When you



have nearly run out of length join a new tube. Keep going this way for a few rounds, or until you are satisfied with the size of your base.

Next, bend the tubes upwards and continue weaving in and out to create the height of your basket.



When you are ready to finish the basket, tuck the remaining length of the vertical tubes into the weave and cut off the excess. If desired, apply a coat of glue or paint to your basket.

Coiling method

You can also use your paper tubes to make bowls, using a coiling technique.



Take a tube and flatten it, then roll it tightly into a coil. When you reach the end, join another flattened tube, being careful to only glue the join and not the layers of the coil (this is so you can manipulate the shape later).



When the coil has reached your desired size, glue down the final end then gently ease up the layers to create your bowl shape. Apply glue all over the surface and leave to dry.

Copper leaves

The age-old art of crafting copperware is deeply rooted in Kashmiri culture and is famous all over the world. Embossing is one of many techniques used to impart a design upon the metal. The metal is pressed with an embossing tool or stylus in order to create a raised effect on the opposite side.

Here we show you how you can make beautiful decorative leaves to brighten up the home, inspired by the ancient artistry of metalwork.

You will need:

Sheets of copper, or you can use empty aluminium drinks cans or tin-foil trays
Scissors
Pen or pencil
Natural leaves, to use as a template

If you are using old drinks cans, cut off the top and bottom of each can with scissors. Be careful when cutting metal, as the edges will be sharp.

Next, cut down the side of the cylinder and flatten out the metal.

Trace the shape of a leaf on to the metal using a pen or pencil.

Repeat with the same leaf, or you could try different shapes.

Cut out your leaves, then use a pen or pencil to emboss the veins and other details.

The leaves can then be made into decorative pieces to brighten up your home.



You could punch holes in the leaves and thread them together into a garland, or attach them to a wreath.

You could also glue the leaves to lengths of thin copper wire and twist these together for an interesting effect.



Damascene mosaics

The creation of wooden mosaics, the art of inlaid wood, is one of the oldest, most distinguished traditional handicrafts practised in the heart of Damascus. The roots of this handicraft extend back thousands of years and it is passed down through generations, from elders to children.

Fine examples of the craft can be seen adorning Umayyad Mosque and old Damascene houses such as Beit Nizam, Beit Al-Sibai, Maktab Anbar and Beit Khalid al-Azem. Wooden mosaic furniture and other decorative items are still made in many workshops and markets in Damascus Old City.

Fatima's story

These carved mosaic boxes are special to me because when my mother got married, she was given this box and they remind me of my father and mother. When I left Syria, I brought these boxes with me to London.

I lived in the old centre of Damascus in a very old house, we had a mosaic table like this box and many things like this.

My friend has a house in old Damascus full of traditional antiques like this which are important to our culture.

These carved mosaic boxes are made by skilled craftsmen in the heart of the old

city, which is where I lived. Making them requires accuracy, patience and love as it takes about two months to finish a single piece. The art of mosaics dates back thousands of years to as early as 300 BC. Passed down through generations, each artist will have a junior apprentice training with him.

The mosaics are carved using a hammer and chisel to delicately carve the shape in the wood. Then, different types and colours of wood are inlaid such as ebony, rosewood, eucalyptus, walnut, almond, olive, and lemon wood with mother-of-pearl shell. The pattern is inspired by combinations of geometric shapes and patterns and the artisan's imagination.

Wooden mosaic furniture such as wardrobes, tables, boxes, chairs and mirror frames are still handmade today in the old city.

Every piece is unique as it is handmade. In Syria, there are special old houses where all the furniture is all made of mosaic.

Before, these were affordable to everyone but now they are very expensive and bought by rich people. Today there is a famous museum of mosaics in Damascus.

There are two kinds of mosaics: those found in old Syrian houses, especially in Damascus, and those tiled mosaics found in mosques and churches.

In Arabic, the word for mosaic is 'fasayfsa' (pronounced fasay-fasa-eh).

Can you say it in Arabic?



Islamic geometric patterns

Wisam creates beautiful hand-painted mosaic boards inspired by Islamic geometric patterns.

"Sacred Geometry is a form of art that explores spiritual and sacred meanings in geometric shapes and patterns. Islamic Geometry is one of many examples of 'Sacred Geometry', as well as mandala and many other forms that can be found in many cultures and historical periods.

Developed throughout centuries, Islamic geometric patterns reflect the height of artistic and spiritual expressions of craftspeople and artists who developed them, culminating in masterpieces found in sacred spaces and palaces around the world, like the Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain.

I was always fascinated by art and architecture of Muslim communities. I grew up in Syria surrounded by buildings that embody the creativity of artists and architects who worked

on them. Having studied architecture and history, I developed even more appreciation for the artistic and cultural expressions of the diverse communities from different places and religions who lived through and created the richness of Muslim civilisations.

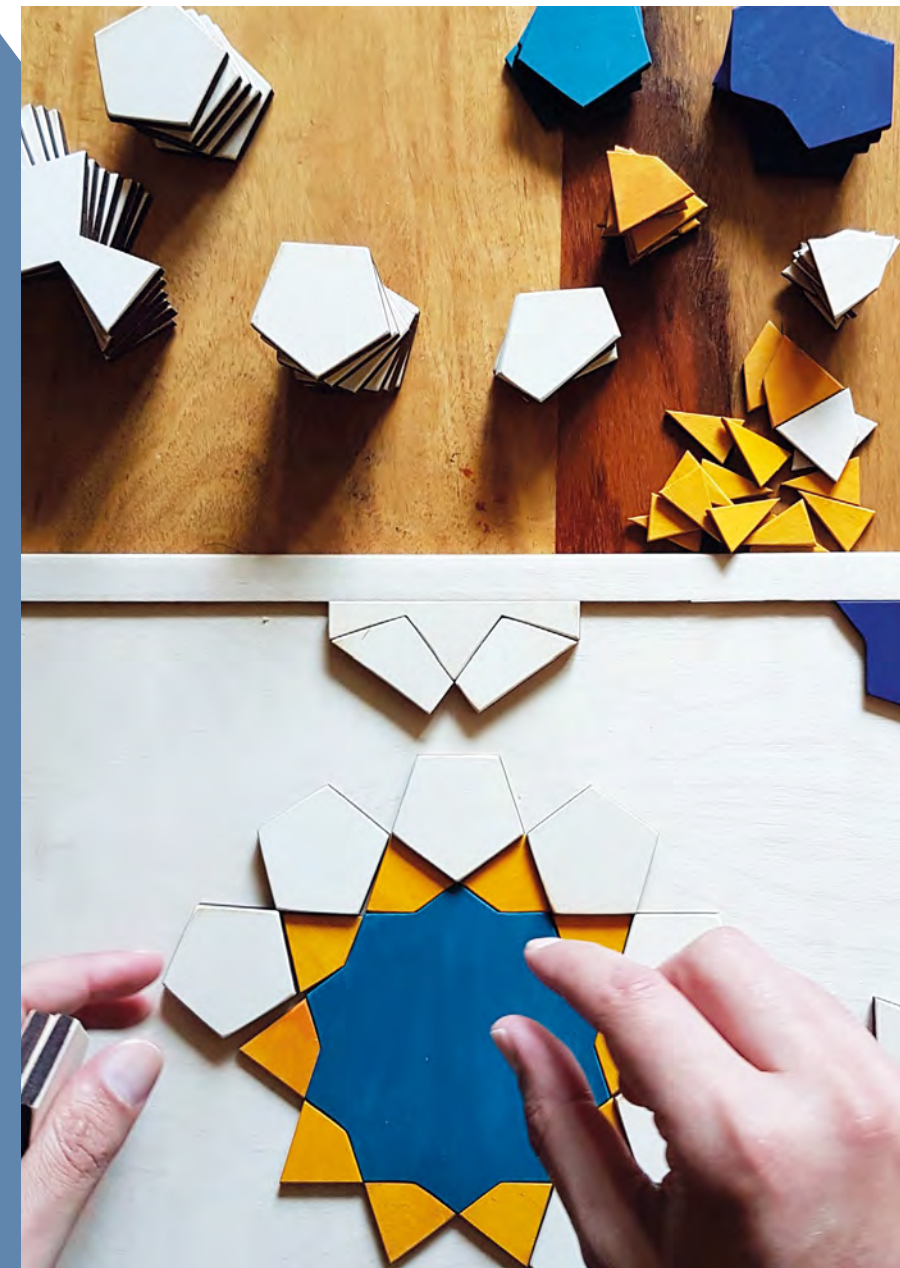
I had the opportunity to visit the Alhambra Palace in Spain about 10 years ago. I was fascinated by its beauty and elegance. I immediately fell in love with the geometric patterns that decorated the place, and wished I knew how to create them. I am very happy that I have picked up on this passion recently, and now I understand and can draw these patterns better.

I have built the mosaic boards based on this learning, with the aim that those who use them will be able to lay the

pieces next to each other in a similar way they are laid in the Alhambra Palace.

My hope is that the artistic quality of the patterns, and the natural tactility of wood, create an experience that helps people relax and engage in a mindfulness experience that helps their wellbeing."

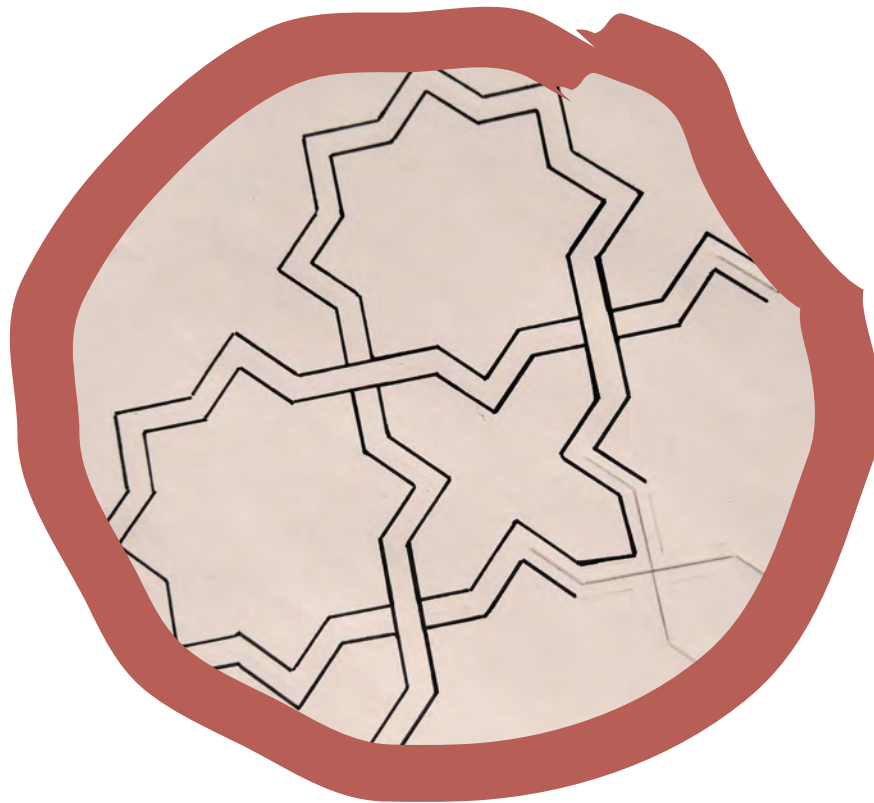
-Wisam



Drawing Islamic geometric patterns

The starting point for every geometric pattern is a circle. Construction lines are then added to create intricate designs. The way the circles and lines intersect determines the shape and “family” of the pattern.

Here we show you a simple way of drawing an eightfold motif that can be repeated and embellished to create a beautiful pattern.

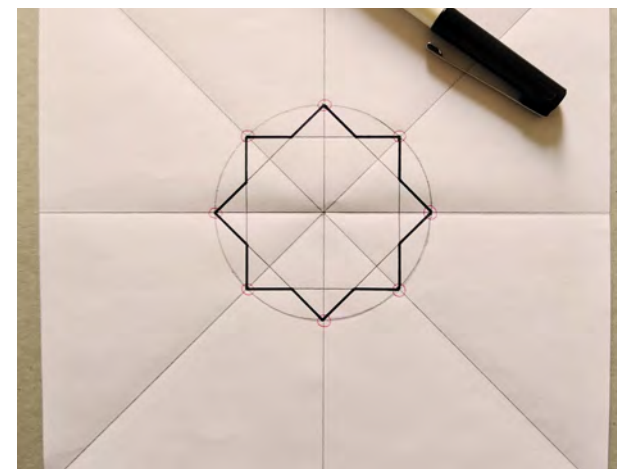
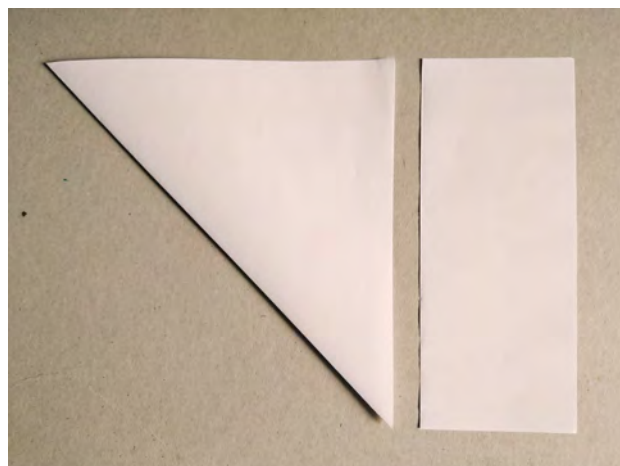


You will need:

Paper
Scissors
Sharp pencil
Pen
Compass
Tracing paper
Spoon

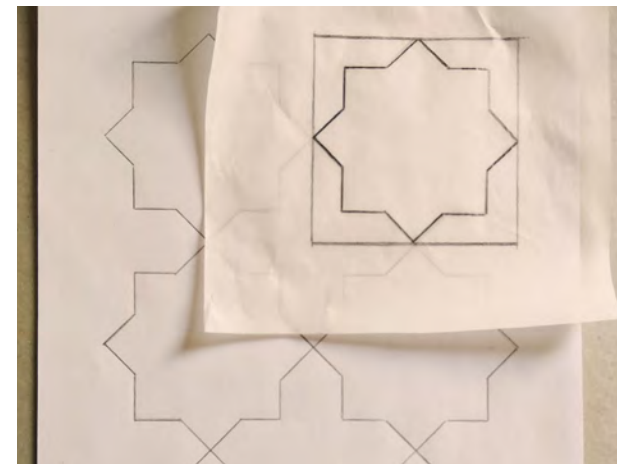
Take a regular sheet of A4 paper and make a square by taking a corner and folding across to form a triangle, then cutting away the rectangle as shown.

Fold the square in half vertically, horizontally and diagonally, then flatten out.

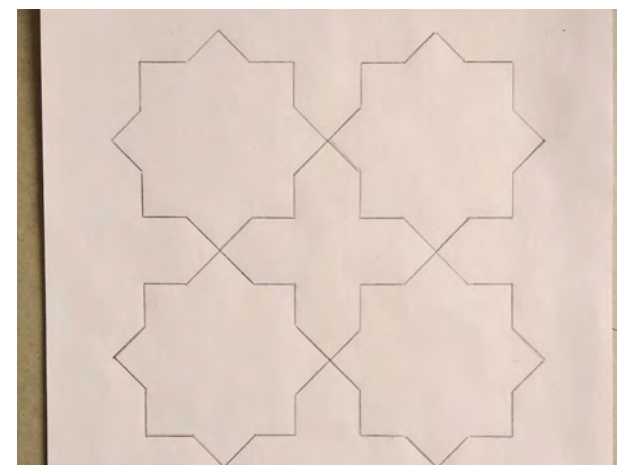


Starting from the centre where the folds intersect, draw a circle using a compass.

Tip: if you don't have a compass you can rotate the paper around two pencils held tightly together like chopsticks.

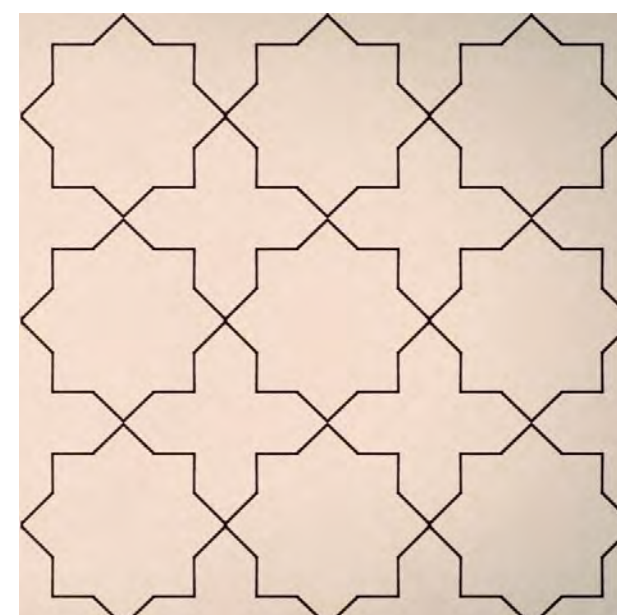


Using a ruler and pencil, draw over the fold lines, then draw two overlapping squares within the circle by connecting the intersections as shown. You will now be able to outline an eight-pointed star shape. Use a pen to do this so it is easier to see.



The next step is to copy and tessellate this shape into a pattern. Use tracing paper to copy the shape, then outline with a square to form a tile (this will help you to align your pattern).

Use the back of a spoon to rub the tracing of the motif on to a fresh sheet of paper in a repeated pattern.



You can take your pattern one step further by drawing in bands of even width around the repeated motif, which go under and over each other to create an interlocking effect. Use a ruler for accuracy (see close-up image on facing page).

Lavender bags

Lavender bags have been used for centuries to fragrance rooms and deter moths and other insects from places where clothes and linen are stored. The scent of lavender also brings a sense of calm and relaxation – try placing one under your pillow to aid a good night's sleep. They make great gifts and are a good way of using up scraps of fabric.

You will need:

2 pieces of scrap fabric – linen works well

Pins

Needle and thread or sewing machine

Dried lavender

Ribbon (optional)

With right sides facing inwards, pin the two pieces of fabric together.

Starting about 1cm from the edge, sew all the way round, leaving a small opening on one side.

Snip off the corners, then turn the bag inside out.

Fill the bag with dried lavender – as much or as little as you like.

If you'd like the option of hanging up the bag, position a short length of ribbon in a loop halfway across the top edge.

Finish by sewing across the gap, keeping close to the edge.

You can embroider designs on to the bag if you wish.



Lavender bath salts

Good for relaxation and promoting a good night's sleep. They can also help to soothe muscle aches

You will need:

2 cups Epsom salts

½ cup sea salt

2-3 tablespoons dried lavender (optional)

20 drops of lavender essential oil

Mix together the ingredients in a bowl. Store in an airtight jar or container and use as much as desired when needed.



Rag rugging

The tradition of making rag rugs became widespread in homes across the UK during the Industrial Revolution as a thrifty way of repurposing old clothing that had reached the end of its life. There are various names for rag rugs in different parts of the UK, including proggies, proddies, poke mats, peg mats and clootie mats.

Rag rugging is an easy, sociable craft that can be picked up and put down again whenever you feel like it. The same technique can be used to make cushions and seat mats.

You will need:

A piece of hessian, or a hessian sack
Old fabric
A wooden clothes peg to make a progger (your rag-rugging tool)
Needle and thread or sewing machine

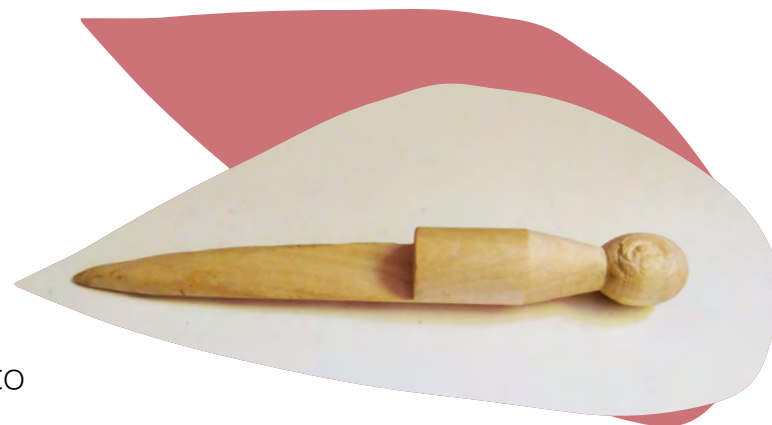
How to make a progger

Saw off one side of your dolly peg, then sharpen the other side to a blunt point with a carving knife. Sand off any rough edges. (see image below)

Making your rags

Old cotton duvets, dresses and shirts make good rags. T-shirts also work well.

Cut strips from your fabric about 3cm (1 inch) wide, then cut these strips into short lengths. You can use the distance from your wrist to the end of your thumb as a guide.



"What I like the most about rag rugging is the end product. It passes the time and it does someone good. It wouldn't cost you much to do rag rugging. I bought a metre of hessian and it was £2.95. And it's recycling. If I go to a car boot I might pick up a T-shirt for 25p and that does quite a big square. And you've always got something indoors you could sort out. It's like some of my T-shirts go under the arms, so I cut the rest up.



I've done a cottage pattern that I made into a pillowcase. And I've done another one with all different squares, spots and stripes, a big square rug.

I'm teaching two little 6-year-old twins how to do it too. I draw a picture on it for them and I give them all the odd balls of wool and a needle. I've shown them the progger and I've said we'll buy some pegs like that and we'll make one between us, and then I'll teach them how to use that."

- Sue, UK



Preparing your hessian

Cut your hessian to the size you would like your rug to be, allowing room for hemming. You will need to hem the edges at least 3 cm, as hessian frays easily.

If you'd like to create a design, mark it out on to your hessian in chalk first, then with felt tip when you're happy with it.

Get propping!

Start propping along the outline of your design.

To do this, poke a hole through your hessian with your propper and push half of the rag through the hole.

About 1cm along make another hole with your propper and pull the other half of the rag through. Repeat this process by poking another rag piece into the last hole you made and pulling it through 1cm further along.

Keep going until you have propped your way around the outline of your design. Once you've completed your outline, move on to the next row (starting 1cm from the previous edge) and gradually work your way across the rest of your design.



My rag-rugging top tip is make up your own picture. Do a design that you want to do, don't copy someone else's.
- Sue

Origami

Origami comes from the Japanese words oru (to fold) and kami (paper) and is the simple act of folding paper to create different shapes. In ancient Japan, handmade paper was a luxury item only available to a few, therefore paper folding was a practice restricted to ceremonial and religious purposes.

"Because it was Valentine's Day, I thought of something about love, so I thought of love letters, love hearts."

I learnt about origami when I was young... my dad taught me. Some people haven't done origami before, they don't know how to fold it, but once you show them they are happy." - Ada



Origami cranes

What if you could have one wish? What would it be?

There is a legend in Japan that if you make 1,000 origami cranes, your wish could come true. The crane is also a symbol of hope and healing during challenging times. In Japan the crane is said to live for 1,000 years and some people believe that one must fold 1,000 cranes within a year for your wish to be granted.

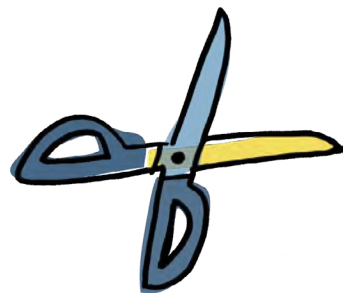
You can find free step-by-step instructions for making a crane and other origami designs at origami.me/diagrams/

You could try making origami using wrapping paper, old newspapers or other types of paper that would normally be discarded.



Paper marbling

Ebru is the Turkish art of paper marbling. It is a centuries-old Ottoman and Islamic art that involves dropping paint on to a thick liquid, called “size”, which results in a pattern of floating colour that can be transferred onto paper.



You will need:

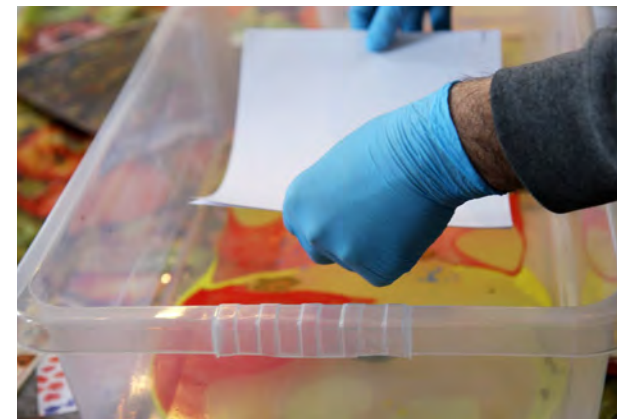
Medium-weight absorbent paper
Carrageenan (Irish moss) powder
Marbling paints
Tray
Pipette or syringe
Brushes
Tools to create patterns, such as a chopstick or a comb

To make the “size” liquid

Use 2 teaspoons of carrageenan per 4 cups of warm water. Blend (using a blender) until the powder is fully dissolved. Make as many batches as you need to fill your tray.

Refrigerate for 24 hours before use to obtain the best viscosity and to allow trapped air bubbles to escape. Allow the size to get to room temperature before use.

“We found the colours clear and impressive. The activity made us feel peaceful and relaxed.”
– Baris and Tulay, Turkey



The process

Fill the tray with the size. Drop small amounts of paint onto the size, using a pipette or brush. Experiment using different colours. Because the size is thicker than water, the colours should spread out on the surface. You can then move the colours using tools such as a stylus or comb to create elegant patterns.

When you are happy with the design, carefully lay a sheet of paper on the surface in one smooth motion (the best way to do this is by holding the opposite corners of your paper). The paper will pick up the layers of paint lying on the surface, capturing the pattern.

Carefully lift the paper off the size. Gently rinse off the excess “gloop” and hang the sheet up to dry. Skim off any colour residue remaining on the size in the tray before starting a new pattern.



Upcycling

Upcycling is a great way to reduce waste and breathe new life into tired, unwanted furniture. At community upcycling hub The Loop in Hackney, people from all walks of life come together to learn new skills and lovingly restore unique items.

Here we show you how to transform an old dining chair.

Reupholstering a chair

You will need:

Screwdriver
Staple remover
Staple gun
Fabric
Scissors



"I've really enjoyed going to the Loop and learnt a lot. During lockdown I've been making garden furniture and I made some floating shelves for my daughter from bits of wood I found on my everyday journeys. If I see wood lying around, I pick it up."
— Desmond

Unscrew the chair seat from its base.

Remove any tacks or staples to loosen the old fabric and pull this off the seat. Keep this fabric as a template for cutting your new piece of fabric to size. If the seat's padding is looking worn add new foam and batting.

Tip: cut the new piece of foam slightly larger than the seat base before affixing, as it will compress when you apply the fabric over it.

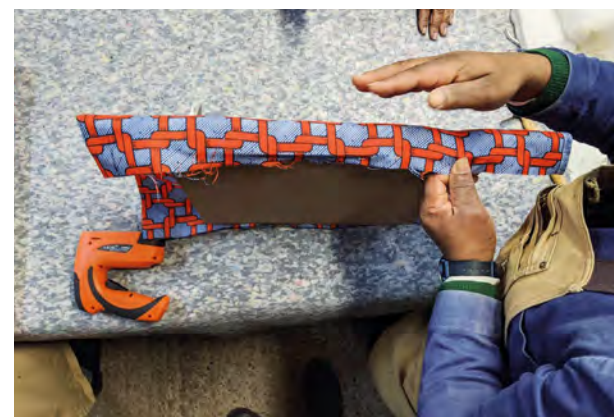
Place the new piece of fabric for your seat cover right-side down. Place the chair foam-side down on top of it.

Starting with the top edge, staple once in the centre. Repeat with the bottom edge, then the other sides, pulling the fabric tight before you staple.



Working one side at a time, staple from the centre outwards until the sides are securely stapled but leave the corners, remembering to keep pulling the fabric tight and smoothing it underneath as you go.

Tip: pull the fabric more taut than you think you need to, as over time it will loosen and you want the cushion to remain taut when someone is sitting on it.

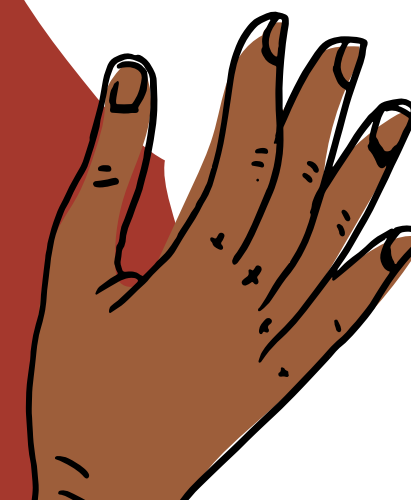


When it comes to folding the corners, pull the point of the corner towards the centre of the seat cushion, then staple it down.



Gather the remaining fabric into small, even pleats, pull tightly, then staple. Be consistent in how you fold. Finally, reassemble your chair with its newly reupholstered seat cushion.

"I enjoyed every bit of time I spent in The Loop, it changed me completely, my mental health. I chose the fabric I used because I like very bright colours and it represents something important in my life, as the patterns are from Nigeria. What I love about upcycling is that it reduces waste. It is a privilege to make items for people who cannot afford new ones." — Adesola



Bird feeders

Winter can be a difficult time for birds and other wildlife as temperatures plummet and food becomes hard to find.



We can lend a helping hand by making bird feeders to hang up in our green spaces, providing a welcome source of high-energy food to help birds survive the cold weather.

Remember to position your feeders in a relatively open area away from predators – the birds will feel safer and be more likely to visit.

How to make an apple bird feeder

You will need:

An apple
Some suitable seeds and grains (millet, oats and sunflower seeds work well)
Some string
A stick

Remove the core from the apple and push seeds into the top half of the apple for the birds to eat.

Make a perch for the birds by tying some string around the middle of a stick, then threading the string through the core of the apple.

Hang your feeders from the branch of a tree in your garden or local green space and wait for the birds to descend!



How to make a pine-cone bird feeder

You will need:

Pine cones
Suet or lard
Bird seed
Dried fruit, such as raisins
Chopped nuts
Grated cheese
Ribbon or string

Tie a length of ribbon or string very firmly to the pine cone so that you can hang it up.

Mix the suet/lard and other ingredients together in a bowl.

Push the mixture into the gaps all around the pine cone.

"We made bird feed with lard and we went to put that out – that was really nice. Because I live on the estate, I went back to check if everything got eaten. Because we had lots of things in there – apples with seeds in and bird-seed balls. So, I went to have a look, and they were literally gone, literally. At one point I even saw a bird pulling at the string. I wish I had my phone at the time"

– Hina



Sowing wildflowers

Growing wildflowers is a great way to give a boost to wildlife in our urban areas. They attract a wide variety of birds and pollinators such as bees and butterflies and bring a welcome splash of colour.

If you don't have access to a garden or a patch of soil you can grow wildflowers in containers on balconies and paved areas. Larger containers work best as the plants will need room for their roots to grow. You could get creative and repurpose items such as old baths or sinks.

You will need:

Large container
Stones or broken crockery
Top soil or multipurpose compost
Watering can
Wildflower seeds
Something to label your container with

Check that your container has holes in the base for drainage. If not, use a drill or sharp instrument to add some. Add a few stones or some broken crockery to the bottom to help drainage.

Move your container to your chosen space before filling it – a sunny spot is best.

Fill the container with top soil or use peat-free multipurpose compost. Wildflowers don't need lots of nutrients so you could even use some old potting mix. Break up any lumps and leave a gap of 3-5cm from the top for watering.

Gently pat down the soil.

Read your seed pack to determine how much seed to grow in your size of pot. Evenly sprinkle seeds over the surface and lightly cover with some more soil.

Water well, ideally using a watering can with a rose attachment. Label the container so you know what seeds you have planted.

Your seeds should germinate within a couple of weeks.

Be patient and keep looking out for the tiny green shoots of life.

Make sure that the soil in your container remains moist at this

stage, as seedlings will die if the soil dries out completely.

Once established, container-grown wildflowers will need regular watering in dry spells to keep them happy but be careful not to overwater.

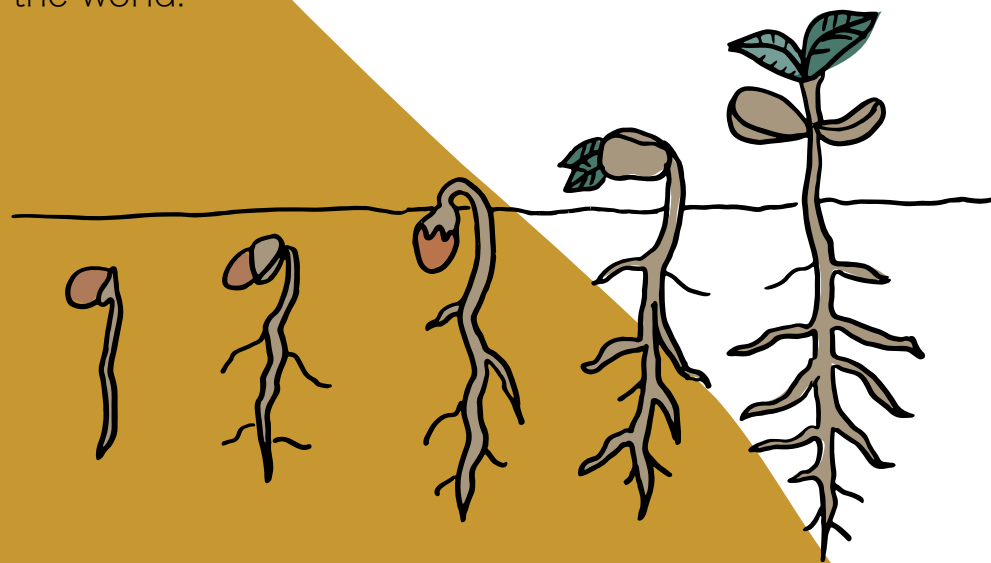


From seed to plate

In the UK, the different seasons mean we can grow a variety of crops to enjoy at different times of the year. Planting winter vegetables takes place between July and September to ensure a harvest of crops such as cabbages and parsnips into February. When the weather begins to warm up in spring, it's time to start sowing seeds for summer crops like tomatoes, courgettes and beans.

Much of what we now think of as British fruits and vegetables originate from other parts of the world. Did you know that the cultivated carrot comes from Afghanistan? Or that the ancestor of the modern apple comes from the wild forests in the mountains of Kazakhstan?

If you've ever grown your own food, you'll know how special it is to sow a tiny seed and watch it grow into something you can harvest. Here we share our experiences of food growing in the UK and in other parts of the world.



Ruth is from a family of gardeners and farmers in Nigeria. "I remember back home my neighbours trying to grow yam. It doesn't grow straight, so they used sticks to grow it up. I also remember plantations growing pineapple. My friend's grandad used to own a farm where he grew pineapples, yams and chillies."

When **Waeed** was growing up in Syria, gardening was her mother's job. She would grow fruit and vegetables for the family. Now, Waeed grows cabbage, onions and tomatoes in front of her house in London.



Susima grew tomatoes, beans, strawberries and potatoes in her last home. It makes her happy to plant and watch things grow and flower.



Najib had many fruit trees back home in Afghanistan. There were hundreds of them, including apple trees and mango trees. They would sell the fruit.



In Syria, **Moutasem** grew potatoes, tomatoes and olives as well as wheat that he also fed to his family's horse.

Hossein, from Iran, has been growing potatoes here in the UK (see below)



"I loved gardening in my country... I come from a region, not from the capital Khartoum. My region is West Sudan, so we have our own field, so we used to do our own gardening.

That's the very good thing because I have a garden now. I try to do some gardening... I want to grow some vegetables, because we have a special vegetable in Sudan and they sent me the seeds. It's called molokhia [مؤيؤولم]. It's close to the Spanish one, but it's different.

With the garden, you do not need to buy vegetables outside. You can grow them organically and benefit from your own garden and save money."

- Aamira



Urban food growing

You don't need a garden to grow your own food in the city. A sunny window ledge, balcony or patio will do to keep you supplied with fresh herbs and greens all year round. And some of these plants you can get for free!

Microgreens

Microgreens are one of the easiest food crops urban gardeners can grow. Microgreens are the tiny seedlings of plants we usually harvest when they are fully grown. They are nutrient powerhouses, packed full of flavour, and can be enjoyed on their own, in salads, or used as a garnish.

Pea shoots

You will need:

Dried peas (look for "marrowfat" variety)

A container (fruit punnets are ideal)

Compost, or you can use a mix of cotton wool and paper towels

A small watering can or spray bottle



Soak a large handful of peas in water for a few hours or overnight to help them germinate quicker.

Spread an even layer of compost, about 2-3cm thick, in the base of the container. Alternatively, lay down a few sheets of paper towel or a layer of cotton wool.

Add an even layer of peas – don't worry if they touch or overlap.

Water well and cover the seeds with a fine layer of compost (or a damp paper towel). To create a warm, dark environment for the peas to germinate, you can also add a plastic bag over the top of the tray with some holes snipped in it for airflow.



Remove the cover when the shoots begin to emerge and transfer the container to a place that gets a good amount of light, like a windowsill.

Water daily to keep the growing medium moist. If using paper towel/cotton wool, adding organic nutrients will encourage healthy growth. Try tea leaves or leftover water used to cook vegetables – just remember to let the liquid cool before applying!

Your pea shoots will be ready to harvest in around 2 weeks, and as an added bonus they will often regrow to give you another harvest.

Harvest the pea shoots when they are about 10cm tall, just above the lowest set of leaves.



Bean sprouts

Bean sprouts are a healthy and tasty vegetable that are easy to grow at home. They are used in traditional Chinese cooking and are perfect for throwing in stir-fries and salads.

You will need:

½ cup dried mung beans
Water
Clean glass jar
A piece of cheesecloth
Rubber band

Rinse ½ cup of mung beans thoroughly and place in the bottom of a jar.

Fill the jar with water and fix some muslin over the mouth of the jar with a rubber band.

Place the jar in a dark cool place and leave the beans to soak for 8 to 12 hours.

After soaking, drain the water from the beans, rinse with fresh water, and drain again. Return the jar to the dark location.

At least twice a day over the next few days, repeat this process of rinsing with fresh water and draining the water completely.

After a few days the sprouts will be ready to eat. Remove them from the jar and rinse well. Eat immediately, or store in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Growing from food scraps

You can grow new shoots from food scraps that often get thrown away, right in your kitchen. All you need is a sunny windowsill.

For celery, fennel and onions...

Save the bottom part and place in a shallow saucer of water. Use the green shoots in salads or stir-fries. You can also try transplanting into a pot with soil for more extended use.

For lettuce...

Cut the base of a head of lettuce away from the leaves and place in a bowl of water. Refresh the water every 1-2 days and within 2 weeks you'll have enough new leaves for a sandwich or side salad.

For beetroot and carrots...

Save the shooting tops of carrots and beetroot to grow nutritious leaves. Place in a shallow bowl, saucer or container and keep topped up with a little water.

Baby beetroot leaves are delicious in salads, whilst leafy green carrot tops can be used to make pesto.

Carrot tops contain six times the amount of vitamin C as the carrot root that we usually eat!



Herb cuttings

Herbs can be grown on a windowsill or balcony that gets a good amount of sunlight each day.



You can grow herbs for free by taking cuttings from established plants to grow into new ones. This works for mint, rosemary, thyme, lavender, basil, sage and many more herbs.

To do this, cut pieces of green growth at a diagonal angle from a healthy plant. Cut just below where a leaf is growing – this is called a node and it is where the cutting will root from.

“During lockdown, my friend posted me a cutting from his mint plant. I’ve been nurturing it from the day it arrived and it’s now grown into a healthy plant. He’d grown his from a cutting that he’d taken when he was in Morocco, where fragrant mint tea is enjoyed at all times of day. I love that I am now growing a little part of Morocco here in London.”
– Laura



Carefully remove the lower leaves and insert your cuttings firmly into a pot of compost. Ensure none of the leaves are below the compost or are touching each other.

Water well and place in a warm, sunny spot. Some cuttings may die but with luck some will “take” and grow roots. You can also try rooting your cutting in a small glass of water – this works well for mint.

Once your cuttings have rooted, transplant individually into larger pots and watch your herb garden grow.

Before



After



Herbal teas

Herbal tea can be brewed using fresh or dried herbs.

Use one teaspoon of dried herbs or a couple of sprigs of fresh herbs for every cup of tea and strain before drinking.

There are endless combinations for herbal tea. Experimenting with different flavours and blends is a delicious way to make the most of your homegrown herb garden.

Why not share your favourite blends with others?

Whether harvesting for tea or for almost any other purpose, you should gather herbs on a dry, sunny morning, after the dew has evaporated but before the sun is hot enough to sap the plants of their essential oils.

Experiment with brewing times. Longer steeping will generally give a stronger flavour but some herbs can taste bitter if steeped too long.



Lemon verbena and lavender tea



Chamomile



Foraging

You can find edible leaves, berries and flowers growing wild in the city, if you know where to look. Here are a few examples.

Only pick something you are 100 per cent sure you have identified correctly. Remember to only take small amounts and leave enough for other animals and the land.

Elderflowers

Elder is a small shrub or tree common throughout the UK that grows in hedgerows, parks, roadsides and disused areas. It bears creamy white flowers from late May to early July, followed by berries in autumn. Elderberries are mildly poisonous and should be cooked before consuming. They have long been associated with healing and are thought to possess antiviral and anti-inflammatory properties that help strengthen the immune system and fight colds and flu.

Elderflowers can be gathered and used to make cordial, or you can coat whole flower heads in batter and enjoy them as fritters. Choose a dry, sunny day and keep the flowers upright so that the pollen, the source of their unique flavour and fragrance, will not be lost.

Elderflower cordial

Makes about 2 litres

15 large heads of elderflower
3 unwaxed lemons, sliced
1 ½ litres water
1kg caster sugar

Shake your elderflower blossoms to remove any bugs and place in a large heatproof bowl with the lemon slices.

Heat the sugar and water in a large saucepan until the sugar has dissolved, then bring to the boil.

Pour the liquid over the elderflowers and lemon and cover with a tea towel. Leave to steep for 24 hours.

Strain your cordial through a fine sieve lined with muslin and pour into sterilised bottles.

Chickweed

A tasty green that can be eaten raw in salads, chickweed is high in vitamin C and also rich in iron and other minerals. It is available most of the year, although sometimes difficult to find in hot summers. When large or plentiful, harvest just the tops.



Nettles

Nettles are a common sight in hedgerows and areas of wasteland. The leaves are extremely rich in vitamins and minerals and can be boiled and eaten as a vegetable as freely as you would eat spinach or other greens. Try adding to soups and stews or use fresh as a tea. Pick young, fresh leaves and remember to wear gloves to protect your hands from their sting!



Dandelion

Dandelion leaves are bitter but very good for you and can be mixed with milder salad leaves. They are high in calcium, iron and antioxidants.



Rose petals

In addition to their well-known scent, rose petals make a delicious tea, garnish, syrup or jam, as well as a valuable all-round tonic that is especially good for the heart. Their strong, aromatic flavour features in many Indian and Middle Eastern sweet treats such as Turkish delight.

In the UK, the wild dog rose can be found in hedgerows, woodlands, scrublands and gardens, and its petals can be picked when it comes into flower around June.

In autumn, large red rosehips will develop which can be boiled into a syrup. Just make sure to strain rosehips when using to remove the hairy seeds, as these can irritate the stomach. During WW2, when oranges were in short supply, rosehip syrup was given to children as a source of vitamin C.



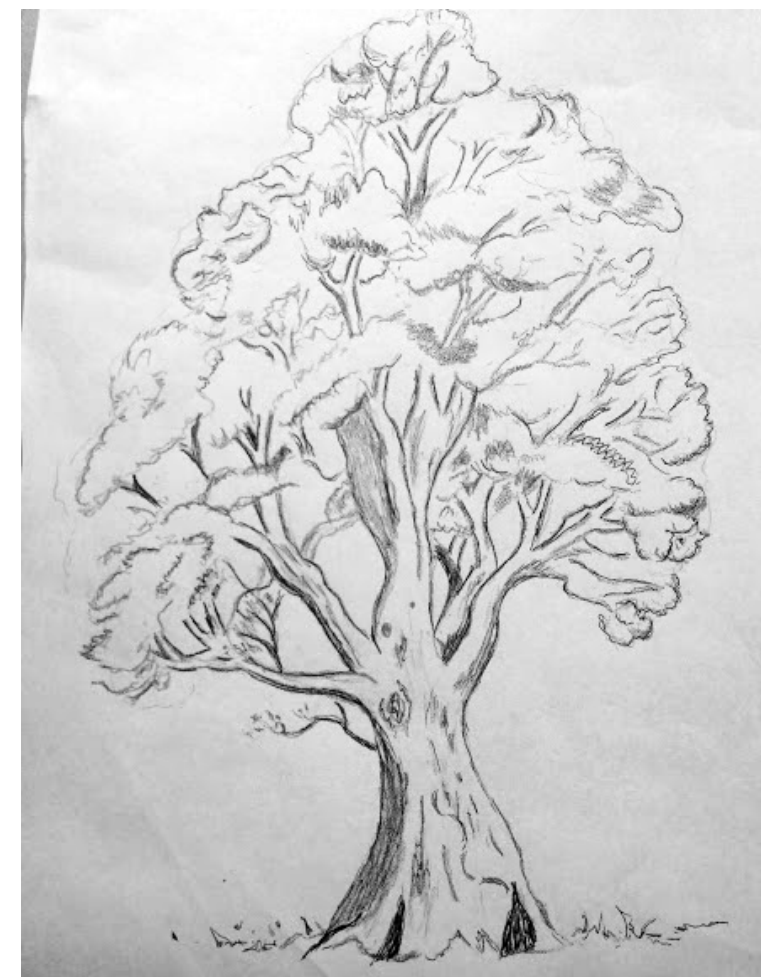
Exploring our connection with nature

Taking time to contemplate nature can do wonders for your mental health. Here are some of the ways we celebrate nature and some thoughts about how these activities make us feel.

"I was brought up with horses and dogs. It's like paradise- it's embedded in me. Sometimes when I am having difficult moments, I go back to those moments."
- Kim

"Being outside reminds me of back home...elders on the small farm, using their hands. Young people would go as a collective and help finish tasks."
- Aamira

Sketching



"I like drawing so much. It relaxes me. When I see my drawing and I feel happy with the drawing it makes me feel very positive."
- Susima

Sketch of an oak tree by Susima



Nature photography



"I feel relaxed when I
hear birds sing.
I feel really nice when
I hear the voice of the
leaves on the trees."

— Baris

Writing poems

Sunshine and bees

Plants germinating

Running in the park with my
children

I'm feeling happiness about
colourful flowers

Nice weather, nice rain

Great weather!

Refugee week 2020

What human qualities would you take with you on a long journey?



Refugee Week is a UK-wide festival celebrating the creativity and resilience of refugees. Founded in 1998 and held every year around World Refugee Day on the 20 June, Refugee Week is also a growing global movement.

We celebrated Refugee Week 2020

by sharing our thoughts on the theme of 'Imagine'.

'To imagine' is to step beyond the current moment and perceive something different. Sometimes to imagine a different reality is the only way we can journey somewhere new.

What do you see when you imagine a better future?

In my ideal world

people would respect each other - Susima

My hope for the future is that

love will conquer the world - Baris

A peaceful world of

friends - Abubakir

Growing a community with

forgiveness, respect and help - Najib

Imagine a world of

freedom - Susima

North, South, East, West

friendly people - Najib

Everyone, everywhere living

in solidarity - Baris

Easy-to-follow
recipes, crafting and
gardening techniques
from our community in
London



Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and produced by Groundwork London.



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